

## The LAST TIME You'll Ever Need to Read About Time Management

Ever heard someone complain that he or she had too much time on their hands? Thought not. That's why so many thousands of words are written about time management each year. To read every book or article on the subject would leave you with no time for anything else. So *Let'sTalk* editors have compiled a list of the most common time management tips. Here they are — the last words you'll ever need to read on the topic.

**Make "To Do" lists.** Good time managers make "To Do" lists a regular part of their lives. Keeping a list on paper works best because it's easy and portable. Some people also use time/project management software on their computers or handheld data organizers or they save messages for themselves on any of the new pocket-sized recorders.

**Get organized.** Locating lost tools or misplaced pieces of information to finish a project can take up precious time. To use time more wisely, organize your life and keep it that way. A number of books on organization skills are available. Keep in mind that actualizing one

tip can save dozens of hours or more a year.

**Be assertive.** If you have too much to do, say so. If you could use someone else's help, ask for it. If you're asked to do something you don't have time for, speak up. Assertiveness is about honesty, and good time managers are honest with themselves and others.

**Prioritize.** Good time managers develop a way to determine which things on their plate have priority. Try using a rating system next to each item on your "To Do" list — five stars for the most important projects, one star for the least important. And as you enter items on your list, write down when they should be finished.

**Handle each piece of paper only once.** This tip appears again and again because so much time is wasted shuffling papers from one pile to the next. There are four things you can do with each piece of paper you receive — act on it, file it, give it to someone else or throw it away. Decide which is best for each piece of paper you receive, keeping in mind that 95% of papers filed for more than one

year are never used again.

**Don't panic.** At times when you have too much to do and too little time, don't panic. This only wastes precious time. Instead, take a deep breath and use any of these time management tips to help you focus your attention on what needs to happen.

**Eliminate distractions.** Good time managers create the environment they need to get the job done. If you need your calls held or if you need to work in an area free from interruption, do it. A few hours of uninterrupted work each day could go far in solving your time management problems.

**Make time for the most important things.** Ever heard the saying that no tombstone has ever read, "Wish I'd stayed late at the office more often"? Good time managers get the job done, but they also know when and how to make time for their families and themselves. Making time for yourself, your family and the things you enjoy lowers stress, re-energizes you and helps you tackle your workload.

## Peer Referral

Good advice for troubled employees.

- A co-worker complains to you about his ex and the divorce.
- Another co-worker is at wits end with her teenaged daughter. It's all she wants to talk about.
- Another co-worker complains that no one helps her take care of her ailing mother.

It's human nature to help people closest to us. So when a co-worker confides a problem, we want to listen and offer what advice we can.

But sometimes the best advice is to ask that person to talk to a helping professional such as someone in the employee assistance program (EAP). EAP

staff are trained to understand the problems people face and how these problems can best be resolved.

There are several risks in trying to solve a co-worker's problem. If the co-worker takes up work time talking about his/her problem, it could affect your job performance. You may have to work longer hours to make up for the lost time. And if you give advice that backfires, the co-worker could blame you.

Perhaps most importantly, EAP staff are trained in identifying mental illness, addiction and other concerns that may be the source of a co-worker's troubles. All the advice in the world won't help if

a co-worker needs professional help. Here's a gentle way to guide someone to that help:

"[Co-worker's name], I've been as helpful as I can be, but I feel I've reached a limit as to what I can do. I think you should talk to someone who helps people solve these kinds of problems all the time. I think you should talk to someone in the EAP. I don't want anything bad to happen to you, and I value our relationship. I want to see you happy and feeling good again."

For more information or for help in handling a troubled co-worker, contact the EAP.

# Mood Lifters

Not feeling your usual positive self?  
Try these pick-me-ups.

**Re-wire what you say and think.** Instead of saying things like, "This day is shot" or "I'm not good at this," or thinking things like, "This is really a downer" or "I feel terrible," make a conscious effort to talk and think positively. *I can get over this. I can do this, and I feel great. Things are going to work out just fine.* It's amazing how just a few words can make such a big difference.

**Play your winners.** Winners are things that almost always lift your spirits. At work, keep a photo from a recent vacation or of the car you're rebuilding or display a craft project or one of your child's drawings. Other winners include a favorite CD or a book or video that always makes you laugh.

**Help others.** To help someone else is probably the last thing on our minds when we feel we need help ourselves. But reaching out to someone in need has so many positive emotional benefits. The good feeling that comes from volunteering at a youth clinic, shelter or other venue can naturally lift sagging spirits.

**Step into the light.** More people seek help for depression in the winter than

in the summer. Many researchers believe it's because there are fewer daylight hours in the winter. The condition is called Seasonal Affective Disorder. Look for ways to work sunlight into your day just as you would exercise or any other healthy behavior.

**Exercise.** Exercise releases a chemical in the brain that naturally elevates mood. Athletes sometimes refer to this effect as a "physical high." Take a brisk walk, shoot some baskets or whatever else you enjoy that your doctor recommends as appropriate for your state of health.

**Stay away from alcohol or other drugs.** Relying on chemicals to feel better is a common practice. But it doesn't work. Alcohol or other drugs only cover up painful feelings that may need to be addressed before lasting, positive change can take place.

**Ask for help.** It isn't always possible to easily rebound from an emotional down like a relationship breakup or job change. In such cases, try what hundreds of thousands of people do each year: Reach out for help. Your employee assistance program can be of help.

## Self-Help Groups Work

Several studies show that self-help support groups improve a person's ability to cope with a health problem or a traumatic life situation. In one study, four out of five (82%) members of a self-help group for people with depression said they coped better with their illness after they joined. Members who had been with the group the longest scored the

highest. Still another study found that the more meetings a person attends after treatment for alcoholism, the longer a person remains abstinent. In fact, abstinence rates were higher for those attending group than for those who used a prescription drug and didn't go to group. (American Self-Help Clearinghouse)

## RELATIONSHIP HEALTH

### The Best Retirement Plan

What are your retirement plans? Cross-country trips in the motorhome? New hobby? Sunny days on the golf course?

How about going back to work? For some retired couples, it may be the key to retirement happiness.

Cornell University researchers surveyed 500 couples either close to or already in retirement to determine which couples were most content with their marriage and themselves. They found that newly retired women tend to be more depressed than women close to retirement or who had been retired for some time. Also, men who had just retired had higher rates of marital conflict than men who had yet to retire. For both retired wives and husbands, rates of conflict and depression were highest if the other spouse still worked.

So which couples were happiest in retirement? Those in which the husband retired, then went back to work while the wife stayed retired. In this arrangement, rates of conflict and depression for both spouses were even lower than that of couples where both spouses stayed retired.

"For men, postretirement employment appears to be beneficial to their well-being. Those who are retired and re-employed report the highest morale and lowest depression," said the researchers.

Like any other important life event, the key to adjustment in retirement is directly related to your flexibility. Instead of viewing retirement as a time when you won't work, keep an open mind.

Source: American Psychological Association, 1999.



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